

DAMON and PYTHIAS

OR

"FRIENDSHIP, CHARITY and BENEVOLENCE"



By I. S. WHITE

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DAMON AND PYTHIAS

or

The Motto of the Knights of Pythias:

"Friendship, Charity and Benevolence"
Impressively Delineated
and Versified.

Also

A SHORT POEM ON D.O.K.K.

By

ISAAC S. WHITE

The Backwoods' Poet

Author of "Manitoba Muses" Etc.

Composed to Commemorate
the Meetings of the Supreme Lodge and the
Golden Jubilee Celebrations of the
Knights of Pythias, in Winnipeg
August 4 to 14, 1914.

Winnipeg:

ISAAC S. WHITE

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PREFATORY.

The suggestion for this poem came from a K.P., but when we began to study the subject we found the authorities about equally divided as to which of the two was condemned.

The Encyclopedia Britannica, Chambers' Encyclopedia, etc., say that Pythias was condemned, and Damon took his place. Then the Classical Dictionaries of Bremer, Lamprere and other works give it that Damon was the condemned and Pythias the substitute, and as these give the best account of the event we put more credit on their statements.

Yet, not one of the works we consulted gives the story in full, so we have compiled from several, taking from one the part that others have omitted; therefore, the story as here told will be found to be more complete than in any other work, and should be prized by the K.P. and all those who would like to have the best account of the most faithful

display of friendship the world hath ever seen
for no matter which of them was condemned:

The other played a noble part,
That showed true friendship at the start;
And all way through up till the end,
When each one proved a trusty friend:
Then king o'erwhelmed with love display,
Let both their heads upon them stay;
And as a favor then and there,
He sued to their true friendship share.

—I. S. W.

378 Flora Avenue,
Winnipeg, Man.

Damon and Pythias.

Damon and Pythias were two friends,
Whose actions show their love transcends
The love of other men! And here,
The story's told to make more clear,
The Motto of Knights of Pythias:
"Friendship, Charity, Benevolence."
For love is active in these three,
And binds them in a unity.

Friendship must have a bond of love,
And constant be like Turtle-dove;
Without such bond it could not live,
It would not much affection give.

Could man without a friend be blest?
Would he find either peace or rest?

But friendship bringeth rest and peace,
And confidence, to love increase.

A friend is one that you may trust,
For he is always true and just;
He is one who will faithful be,
In trouble or extremity.

If you this thesis grand refuse,
See Pythagoreans of Syracuse;
When Damon was condemned to die,
The wrath of king to pacify;
And how for friendship Pythias doth,
Take Damon's place though king was wroth.

Now this was when Dionysius,
Was tyrant ruler of Syracuse;
A word then spoken without strife,
Might bring to end the speaker's life;
For death was the sure punishment,
For smallest word of discontent.

Now Damon traitors did upbraid,
Who had his country sore betrayed;
He said they'd broken country's laws,
And that the king a tyrant was:

And now his anger rising high,
He charged the king with cruelty;
And for this speech would lose his head,
And soon be numbered with the dead.

Now Damon longed ere came the knell,
To bid his family farewell;—
He wished to say to them: "Adieu!"
And set his house in order too:—
So he applied to king for leave,
A short respite he might receive,
Of hours four he thought would do,
And promised to come back most true.

Dionysius him laughed to scorn,
He would not trust best man ere born;
When once out of the way of pain,
He never would come back again;
So he refused to him unbind,
Unless a substitute, he'd find.

Now Damon knew there was a man,
Who long as friend with him had ran;
That he would come and would go bail
To die for him if he should fail;—

Pythias his substitute would be,
That he might wife and children see.

Now Damon was upon the way
To execution, without delay;
When Pythias met him there to be,
His substitute and surety.

Permission Pythias doth obtain,
To Damon's place take and remain,
While Damon went to say—"farewell,"
And he was put in Damon's cell:
What greater friendship could he show,
Than take his place, to let him go?

Though Damon thought four hours would do,
Dionysius said they were too few;
So he extends the time to six,
And hoped he'd play his friend no tricks;
For not the smallest faith had he,
That Damon's face they ere should see.

But Pythias was not dismayed,
He knew he would not be betrayed;
That Damon sure would come again,
And him release ere he was slain.

His sweetheart thought he should not take
so great a risk, for friendship's sake;
For blind with self she failed to see,
How friendship true should faithful be:
"Damon," she said, "won't come again."
Yet all her pleading was in vain,
For Pythias had his promise made,
Which would not be, by him unsayed.
He said: "I'm not afraid to die."
And whispered then a sweet "Good-bye!"

Now lest that Damon should return,
And family leave,—his loss to mourn;
Lucullus did his good horse slay,
Which act caused Damon long delay;
Who angry was at servant's crime,
Lest he should not get back in time.

Yet Damon proved his friendship true,
By great exertion he went through;
Though almost broke down with remorse,
Bestirred himself to get a horse;
And when he'd many places tried,
By chance a traveller he spied;

And now good luck the horse was fed,
Which he secured and with him sped.

The hours are passing swiftly by,
And Pythias still in cell doth lie;
The fourth hath gone, the fifth is here,
And Damon doth not yet appear.

At length the sixth hour draweth nigh,
And Pythias is brought out to die;
Who will his life most freely give,
That Damon may with family live.

Dionysus now with anger burn,
Because Damon did not return;
Said: "Man can not on man depend,
And you must die for a false friend;
There is no doubt your friendship's true;
But Damon is not a friend like you."

Pythias was happiest man around,
When brought from cell and limbs were bound;
And when Dionysius' speech did end,
He no reproach cast on his friend:
"I'd rather die myself," said he,
"Than children without father see."

Though Damon felt position keen,
The horse some better days had seen;
He firm and steady held the rein,
The time he'd lost he strove to gain;
And through great effort at the end,
Arrived in time to save his friend;
But when he saw brave Pythias bound,
He fell exhausted to the ground.

As Pythias was to scaffold led,
Where he was soon to lose his head;
'Twas just then Damon doth appear,
When Pythias thought his death was near.

Then Damon with recovered breath,
Said he was kept by horse's death;
And mollified by what he said,—
About his first horse being dead;—
The king now waited for to see,
What the next act of friends would be.

Then Damon rising from the ground,
Went up to where Pythias was bound;
And him embraced and much did say,
'Bout being kept so long away;

And was so glad he did arrive,
While his true friend was still alive;
Had he one minute longer been,
Pythias was dead ere he was seen.

Excitement now was passing o'er,
And Damon kissed his friend once more;
Then said to him that he could go,
But Pythias did not wish it so.

"The thought of death hath been so mild,
Go back," said he, "to wife and child;
'Tis best that I demands should fill,
A bachelor's family is nil:
I'll die that you may go again,
And with your family remain."

Dionysius heard Pythias try,
To get Damon to let him die;
And with his speech he was astound,
How could such faithfulness abound?

Some men would die for king or queen,
But friends like these he'd never seen;
And one who'd die to save a friend,
Should have long life and better end.

These were the men that he could trust,
For faithful men are always just;
And such men should be near a throne,
For love like this he'd never known.

And proud there could so good men be,
He pardons both and sets them free;
He grasped and shook them by the hand,
And hoped they'd always so firm stand;
And begged to be admitted then,
To friendship of these faithful men.

Men who were honest, truthful, true,
Whate'er they'd say, they sure would do;
And now his eyes were oped to see,
The cowardice of tyranny;
And no more useful lives were slain,
During remainder of his reign.

So Charity with love combine,
To souls unite and hearts entwine;
For without love there would not be,
The smallest act of charity.

Benevolence with love o'erflow,
They hand in hand together go;

And in each virtue you can trace,
'Tis love that takes the formost place.

A disposition to do good—
By all men should be understood;—
Is love to mankind and goodwill,
And is an act of friendship still.

Benevolence, charity and love,
Will raise true friendship far above
The highest mountain peak on earth,
And spirits fill with joy and mirth.

To Winnipeg, we welcome you,
A band of men—loyal and true;
And hope you all through life shall be,
Examples of "Friendship, Charity,
Benevolence." Your Motto grand—
Most brilliant Motto in the land;
For not one Motto excels this
Motto of Knights of Pythias.

D. O. K. K.

If you a Knight of Pythias are,
Your friendship not a thing should mar;
For where so many friendship share,
All actions must be on the square;
And though you never may feel bad,
You may at times be rather sad;
But sadness soon will pass away,
When you do join D. O. K. K.

The Motto of this Order show:—
That Mirth along with Friendship go;
And it is said that most wise men,
Do love some nonsense now and then;
And all concede once in a while,
A hearty laugh will cares beguile.

But some too modest are to laugh,
And keep within them all the chaff
Of turmoil, trouble, care and pain,
That worries them time and again.

Now if they would once in a while,
Employ an honest, friendly smile,
To cares remove, and pain decoy,
They would some happiness enjoy.

And when the smile more broad becomes,
It shakes the cobwebs from the lungs,
And soon their life-blood will be free
From Tuberculous bacilli;
And men will cease to be morose,
When healthy blood within them flows.

This is the work that Dokey's do,
When they become good friends with you.

Their Order is Dramatic sure,
The fun is mellow, mirth is pure,
And each device that they employ,
Is filled with friendship, love and joy;
So if you would be joyful man,
Then join the Knights of Khorassan.

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